

**Guide
to
Early Intervention
Services
for North Dakota
Children and Families**

Every North Dakota child is special - - unique in abilities, family heritage and potential to grow.

Sometimes babies and toddlers may not seem to keep up with other youngsters. They may lag behind in growth, in learning new skills or in other kinds of development. They may face medical challenges that put them at risk of future delays.

Here in North Dakota, a special kind of partnership between parents and professionals gives every child the best possible start in life. The Department of Human Services' early intervention programs are designed to help your child and your family get the supports you want and need.

EARLY INTERVENTION

When children who need special help receive it early, they have the best possible chance for a good start in life. Research shows that the earlier your child receives intervention the better the outcome will be. These services for infants and toddlers are called early intervention. Early Intervention a special kind of teamwork that can make a real difference in the lives of your child and your family.

Early Intervention means providing help for your child and family at the very earliest possible age. It brings you together with specialists who can offer many kinds of services. Working together, you'll learn new ways to encourage and support your child's development.

Developmental Disability Case Management, Infant Development, Family Subsidy, and Family Support Services are early intervention services offered through the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

REFERRAL

You may have been the first to notice that your child was experiencing delays in mastering new skills or keeping up with other children his age. Or your doctor or another professional may have diagnosed your child's condition. In either case, the first step in getting help is a referral.

Anyone can make a referral.

You can contact your Regional Human Service Center to request that your child be evaluated to determine if they are eligible for early intervention services.

Early Intervention services are voluntary. Whether or not your family takes advantage of early intervention services is entirely up to you.

EVALUATION

Your family will work with a team of professionals to **evaluate** your child to find out if there are needs that require early intervention services. The team will consist of professionals from at least two different disciplines depending on areas in which you have concerns. *Evaluations are voluntary. You must give your permission before any activities can begin.*

If your child has been evaluated recently, the results of those evaluations can be used in the eligibility determination process if you give your permission.

The evaluation team will examine your child's abilities:

- To learn (cognitive development)
- To move, see and hear (physical/motor development)
- To communicate and understand others (speech, language and communication development)
- To respond to others and interact with them (social and emotional development)
- To eat and take care of herself appropriately for her age (adaptive behavior and self-help development)

Although you may not have concerns in all areas, a multidisciplinary evaluation in all areas will help you and your team identify your child's strengths and needs.

Immediately following the evaluation, a summary will be shared with you. You will receive a written report within 2 weeks.

ELIGIBILITY

You will work with a Developmental Disabilities Case Manager from your Regional Human Service Center. The Case Manager will explain the evaluation and eligibility determination process to you, help you coordinate activities and answer any questions you may have.

Eligibility means the requirements your child must meet to receive Developmental Disability Case Management services. To be found eligible, your child must be under three years of age, a resident of North Dakota, and based on criteria defined in eligibility regulations, found to have developmental delays or a diagnosed condition or combination of factors that puts him at **high risk** for future delays.

You will be invited to attend the eligibility meeting. You can also invite other family members or friends to attend with you. If you cannot attend you may wish to participate by telephone.

Children who do not meet the requirements for Developmental Disability Case Management services may still have some concerns that need to be addressed. The eligibility team will make recommendations regarding other services that may be appropriate. With your permission, you may be referred to the Right Track program so your child's progress can be monitored and potential problems can be identified early.

If your child is not eligible, the Eligibility Team at the Human Service Center will inform you of your right to question/appeal the decision made. If you wish, a Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will help you with the appeal process.

CASE PLAN

If your child is less than three years of age and eligible for Developmental Disabilities Case Management services, your Case Manager will help you identify services and supports that can help you and your child. Some of the early intervention services you might receive include:

Infant Development -- A home-based, family focused service that provides information, support and training for families to assist them in meeting their child's needs.

Family Subsidy -- A program that reimburses a family for excess expenses related to their child's disability. Family Subsidy offers support to enable a family to keep their child in their home when lack of financial support would make it very difficult for the family to keep the child at home.

Family Support Services -- A program that provides short- term childcare when a specially trained caregiver is needed in order to met the child's needs. Family Support Services can also provide a specially trained caregiver to work with the family when additional help is needed to meet the child's needs.

Additional services such as, direct therapy, childcare and medical supports will also be included in the case plan.

The "Case Plan" will identify outcomes you want to achieve and the formal and informal supports that will assist you and your child in reaching the outcomes. Supports you want to receive, but are currently not receiving, will also be included in the plan. You and your Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will review the progress towards your outcomes and modify your plan on an on-going basis.

INDIVIDUALIZED FAMILY SERVICE PLAN

What happens next? You are now part of a team of people who will focus on your child's abilities and needs, as well as your family's concerns.

You and your team will expand the "Case Plan" you developed with your Developmental Disabilities Case Manager. This plan for services is called the **Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)**.

Individualized Family Service Plan is an outline of the specific services your child and family will receive.

You will determine who will be part of the IFSP team. You may invite family members or others to attend the meeting. You also may determine when and where the meeting will be held.

Your IFSP will include several important sections:

- information on your child's strengths and needs,
- your family's concerns and priorities,
- outcomes or changes you would like to see happen,
- the specific early intervention services that will help you and your child accomplish the outcomes you have identified,
- details of where the services will be provided, when and how often these services will be provided, what the funding source will be, and who will work with you, and
- when the IFSP will be reviewed and who will be part of that review.

With your permission, the plan will also include a summary of your family's concerns, priorities and resources, along with other services you may be receiving. Your IFSP will be reviewed at least once every six months and your child's abilities and needs will be assessed annually.

FUNDING

There is no charge to you for Developmental Disabilities Case Management, Infant Development Parent Training, IFSP Coordination, and evaluations and assessments conducted by Infant Development. Your Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will work with you to identify funding options for other services you or your child may be receiving.

In order to maximize available funds, the Department of Human Services requires that all children receiving Infant Development services apply for Medicaid. Because Infant Development is a service included in North Dakota's Home and Community Based Service Waiver, the family's income is not deemed available to the child. If the child applies for Medicaid coverage in the Children and Family category, the family's assets are also disregarded. This means that when children receiving Infant Development services apply for Medicaid, neither their family's income nor assets will be considered. Medicaid becomes a funding source that allows the state to collect federal dollars to help provide Infant Development services. If a child is Medicaid eligible, federal funds will cover approximately 70 percentage of the cost of delivering Infant Development services. In addition to the Infant Development costs, Medicaid is also available to assist with direct therapy, equipment and other medical needs of the child.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The professionals with whom you are working must keep information about your child and your family strictly confidential. That's the law. You always have the right to inspect your records. Your permission is required before identifiable information can be shared with anyone else.

Confidentiality means your right to determine who may be allowed to see information and records about your child and your family.

Remember: You are the captain of your child's team. As the person who knows your child best, your permission, your guidance and your approval are absolutely vital every step of the way.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES CASE MANAGEMENT

One of the first team members you will meet is your Developmental Disabilities Case Manager. They will be your connection with North Dakota's system of services. Your Case Manager will help you identify and obtain services, including Infant Development services, Family Subsidy, Family Support Services, or other services that may be appropriate.

Your Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will work with you and your family to help you access supports that meet your needs. If you are unhappy with what is going on, your Case Manager will work with you in finding solutions for your concerns.

As your Service Coordinator they will be responsible for:

- Coordinating all services across agency lines;
- Serving as the single point of contact in helping you obtain the services and assistance identified in your IFSP;
- Facilitating the timely delivery of available services;
- Continuously seeking the appropriate services and situations necessary to benefit the development of your child for the duration of the child's eligibility
- Assuring the timely performance of evaluations and assessments;
- Facilitating and participating in the development, review, and evaluation of your IFSP
- Assisting you in identifying available service providers
- Informing you of your parental rights and procedural safeguards
- Informing you of the availability of advocacy services; and
- Facilitating the development of a transition plan to preschool services, if appropriate.

INFANT DEVELOPMENT

If you receive Infant Development services you and your child will meet regularly with an Infant Development early interventionist professional. Usually she will come to your home to work with you in comfortable, familiar surroundings.

An Infant Development Early Interventionist is specialist who is trained to know how to support you, so you can encourage your child to grow and develop in many ways.

Sessions with your Infant Development professional will center on simple activities you and your child will enjoy, that you can do with your child while you are playing or completing day-to-day routines. The activities are chosen to help him strengthen specific skills and learn new skills that relate to IFSP Outcomes. During the Infant Development home visits you will have a chance to ask questions. The frequency of home visits will be determined based on your families needs.

With your permission, Infant Development staff can work not only with you, but also with others who spend time with your child (Grandparents, child care providers, etc.).

In addition to home visits, the Infant Development Early Interventionist will work closely with you to:

- Coordinate the development of your IFSP,
- Plan and complete assessments, and
- Coordinate the transition process.

TRANSITION

Early Intervention services provided through Infant Development, end when your child turns three years of age. If he continues to need special help, he may be eligible for a variety of services provided by your local school. Your Infant Development Early Interventionist and Developmental Disabilities Case Manager will meet with you and school personnel to determine if your child will be eligible to receive services through the school system when they turn three and what options available in your community you would like to explore.

Your child's eligibility to receive Developmental Disabilities Case Management after they reach three years of age, will be re-determined before they reach two years-nine months of age. If your child is found eligible based on the criteria used for three year olds, you can continue to receive Developmental Disabilities Case Management services.

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

Sometimes you might disagree with decisions about your child's early intervention services. The early intervention programs recognize your right to make decisions about your child. They will take your concerns seriously. Saying "no" to any service will not threaten other services your child may be receiving.

You can always discuss your differences with members of your child's team. By talking about your concerns, you can often resolve a problem quickly and easily.

Mediation: Mediation is voluntary and will be conducted by a qualified and impartial mediator, who is trained in effective mediation techniques and knowledgeable in laws and regulations relating to early intervention services. All mediation sessions will be scheduled in a timely manner and held at a location convenient to all parties. Mediation will not deny or delay your right for an informal conference or an appeal hearing. Discussions that occur during the mediation process are confidential and will not be used as evidence in any subsequent hearings or civil proceedings without your permission. You also have the right to file a **Written Complaint** with the Department of Human Services/Developmental Disabilities Unit regarding your concerns. To request Mediation or to submit a Written Complaint, contact Part C Coordinator, Developmental Disabilities Unit, 600 South 2 St, Suite 1A, Bismarck, ND 58504 or 1-800-755-8529.

Informal Conference: You may request an informal conference with the Regional Human Service Center Director. You may bring other family members or advocates. You'll be informed of a decision within five working days. You have the right to file a formal request for a hearing if you disagree with the decision.

Appeal Hearing: You can also request a formal presentation of your concerns, called an "appeal hearing." (You can request this hearing without first going through the informal conference, if you prefer.) Your request should be addressed to: Appeals Supervisor, North Dakota Department of Human Services, State Capitol, Bismarck, ND 58505.

If you disagree with the outcome of the appeal hearing, you may file for a rehearing or reconsideration. This request, made within 15 days of the decision, must be based on new information indicating an unjust or invalid determination has been made or upon allegation that statutory or case law has been incorrectly interpreted.

Ultimately, you can appeal the decision to district court or bring civil action in state or federal court. The appeal hearing decision is final, unless someone who is a party to the hearing appeals it.

Remember -- as the captain of your child's team, you make all the decisions. Your permission is needed before any evaluations or assessments can be completed, before any information can be shared, before any services can start.

If you have questions, be sure to let us know. We are here to work with you. We have something very special in common -- helping prepare your child to reach his greatest potential in life.

Welcome to the team!